

Message Text

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22

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O 031140Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4396

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY IMMEDIATE

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 3214

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: TECH, ENRG, IN

SUBJ: TARAPUR NUCLEAR FUEL EXPORT LICENSE

REFS: STATE 049812, NEW DELHI 3218

1. AS INDICATED REF B, SINCE CHAIRMAN SETHNA IS NOT IN BOMBAY, THE EMBASSY PREPARED A COPY OF COURTNEY'S LETTER TO HIM AND SENT IT ON MARCH 3 TO SETHNA AT HIS OFFICE IN NEW DELHI. TO ASSURE THAT IT CAME RAPIDLY TO SETHNA'S ATTENTION, THE DCM TELEPHONED HIM AND, IN RESPONSE TO SETHNA'S QUERIES, EXPLAINED THE LETTER'S CONTENTS.

2. RAPIDLY REALIZING THAT PETITION FOR PUBLIC INTERVENTION WOULD ENTAIL FURTHER DELAY IN SUPPLY OF NUCLEAR FUEL, SETHNA REPLIED WITH CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION, ASKING, "WHAT ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO? SHUT DOWN TARAPUR?" SETHNA SAID THE GOI HAD GIVEN AN UNDERTAKING TO USE US FUEL AND ASKED WHY THE US WAS NOT SENDING IT. THE LICENSE WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN ISSUED IN OCTOBER. THEY WERE THEN TOLD THERE WOULD BE A DELAY DUE TO USG REORGANIZATION. THEN, SETHNA SAID, THE MATTER WAS DEFERRED UNTIL DECEMBER AND NOW UNTIL MARCH.

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3. SETHNA SAID THAT THREE AND A HALF MONTHS WERE

REQUIRED FOR THE FABRICATION OF FUEL ELEMENTS IN INDIA. IF THE ELEMENTS WERE NOT AVAILABLE BY JULY 1 THE UNIT AT TARAPUR WOULD HAVE TO BE CLOSED DOWN. THERE WERE ALREADY SERIOUS POWER SHORTAGES IN THE REGION. IF THE UNIT WAS TO BE CLOSED DOWN THE GOI WOULD HAVE TO EXPLAIN THE REASON WHY. SETHNA ASKED HOW MUCH OF A DELAY PUBLIC INTERVENTION WOULD CAUSE? THE DCM REPLIED THAT THIS WAS UNCERTAIN SINCE THIS WAS THE FIRST CASE OF A PUBLIC INTERVENTION OF THIS SORT AND THE PRECISE WAY OF HANDLING IT WAS NOT YET ESTABLISHED. FROM THIS SETHNA CONCLUDED THAT THE DELAY MIGHT BE SUBSTANTIAL AND SAID THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO INFORM THE CABINET.

4. IN ADDITION TO THE LETTER FROM COURTNEY WHICH HAS BEEN SENT TO SETHNA, THE EMBASSY IN A COVERING LETTER HAS PARTICULARLY CALLED HIS ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH VIEWS ON LICENSE ISSUANCE WILL NOT BE ALTERED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE INTERVENTION. SINCE WE BELIEVE IT BEST THAT SETHNA HEAR FROM US ABOUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS ISSUE HAS BECOME PUBLIC IN THE US, WE HAVE ALSO SENT TO HIM THE WIRELESS FILE TEXT OF THE WASHINGTON STAR ARTICLE ON THE INTERVENTION. CONGEN BOMBAY INFORMS US THAT AEC OFFICIALS THERE ARE ALREADY AWARE OF THIS FROM VOA COVERAGE ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 3.

5. IF ANY MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT POSSIBLE DELAY CAN BE PROVIDED TO SETHNA, THE EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT IT BE URGENTLY TRANSMITTED. SETHNA, WHO IS IN DELHI FOR TALKS WITH THE CANADIANS, SEEMS CLOSE TO THE POINT OF DECISION ON WHAT HE MUST DO CONCERNING POSSIBLE SHUTDOWN OF THE TARAPUR UNIT.

6. WE NEED HARDLY POINT OUT THAT SETHNA HAS BEEN MOST COOPERATIVE IN THE PAST, THAT WE HAVE SUBSTANTIAL INTERESTS IN MAINTAINING OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE IAEC IF WE WISH TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS MAINTAINING ITS COMMITMENTS TO US, THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER ISSUES IN THE WIND IN INDO-US NUCLEAR

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COOPERATION RELATIONS ON WHICH WE WILL WANT SETHNA'S COOPERATION, AND THAT INDEED SETHNA'S POINT IS WELL TAKEN THAT IF WE HAD NOT DELAYED SO LONG IN ISSUING THE LICENSE FOR THE ENRICHED URANIUM FUEL SHIPMENT THIS PROBLEM WOULD NOT HAVE ARISEN -- AT LEAST AT THIS TIME.

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